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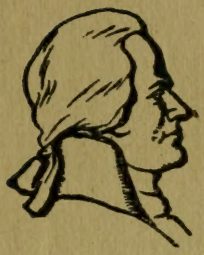
[Modern business Talks]

THE DOMINANCE OF SALESMANSHIP

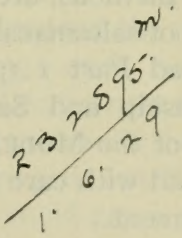


MODERN BUSINESS
TALK No. 13

ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE
NEW YORK

The Dominance of Salesmanship

Number Thirteen of a Series of Modern Business Talks Prepared by the Alexander Hamilton Institute



ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE
NEW YORK

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READING ASSIGNMENT
NUMBER THIRTEEN

"When one individual endeavors to influence another to adopt a certain mental attitude or to act in a certain way, he is practicing salesmanship. Every one can profit by a knowledge of the principles of salesmanship and of successful selling methods."—Page 15, Chapter 1, Volume 7 of the MODERN BUSINESS Text.

(1) Read this Talk on "The Dominance of Salesmanship." The human element is everywhere prominent in the conduct of business. Correct sales policies and approved sales methods amount to little, unless those who are set to execute the policies and to use the methods, are themselves imbued with the true spirit of salesmanship.

(2) Read Part 1 (pages 1 to 206 inclusive) of "Salesmanship and Sales Management," which is Volume 7 of the MODERN BUSINESS Text.

(3) Read with care Lecture 7 which accompanies this assignment.

Possibly no part of the MODERN BUSINESS Course is more important as a means of developing personal power and ability to make one's way against head currents and adverse winds on the sea of business, than Volume 7, upon a study of which you now enter. Certainly, no one who reads this Text can fail to derive a great deal of help and inspiration from it.

"Knowledge is both a weapon and a shield. It helps you to cleave your way to success and is a fine instrument to keep competitors from encroaching on your domains."

Dominance of Salesmanship

"Every man has a vital interest in that knowledge of the human mind and that practice of persuasion in which lies the essence of salesmanship."—Page 16, Chapter 1, Volume 7 of the MODERN BUSINESS Text.

Some time ago, the president of a certain wholesale clothing house conceived the idea of seeking to increase the volume of sales by making an effort to increase the efficiency and skill of the retail dealers thru whom the company's goods were being marketed. His plan was to employ a capable man to visit the dealers and discuss with them their selling and advertising problems. He let it be known that he had a position for a man of at least forty years of age, who, in addition to being familiar with the clothing business, understood the problems peculiar to retail storekeeping, such as selling methods, proper accounting and credit systems, store arrangement, etc. He wanted, as he said, "A broad-gauged man with a broad-gauged knowledge of business." To such a man he would pay a salary of $5,000 a year.

Shortly afterwards a man sought an interview with the clothing manufacturer. Upon being admitted, he announced that he had learned of the plans that were under way in connection with the manufacturer's attempt to increase the merchandising ability of the retailer. He complimented the house

upon its progressive stand, and expressed a desire to be considered an applicant for the position which he understood was to be filled.

"Pardon me," interrupted the president, "but the man I desire for this position should be at least forty years old, and unless I am mistaken you are hardly thirty yet."

"Your estimate of my age is remarkably correct, sir," said the visitor, smiling, "I have still three months left of my twenty-ninth year."

"And your experience in the clothing business?"

"I haven't any, sir, not yet, but——"

"I fear you are wasting your time and mine. A mere knowledge of store arrangement and window display—for I suppose these are the things upon which you base your belief in your fitness for the position—is not sufficient qualification in this case."

"I am forced to confess, sir, that I have never dressed a window in my life, and as for store arrangement, that is a subject which I yet have to study."

The head of the clothing house looked the surprise that he felt. Evidently he hardly knew whether to smile or frown at the audacity of the man before him. Before he could say a word, however, the visitor advanced a step, extended his hand slightly and in a pleasant, tho firm, tone of voice addressed the president substantially as follows:

"Mr. President, suppose a mature man who is thoroly familiar with the clothing line, who has made a success as a retail merchant and is able to give expert advice upon the financial, merchandising

and advertising problems of the retailer—suppose, I say, that such a man should come in here and ask you for a line of credit, would you not be glad to grant him a very liberal amount?"

The president admitted that such a man was very likely to be accommodated in the matter of credit.

"And such a merchant, Mr. President, would likely earn considerably more than $5,000 a year."

"Undoubtedly—a great deal more, I should think."

"It is not likely, therefore, that such a man would forego such large earnings in order to accept a position which in addition to compelling him to be on the road the year round would reduce his earnings to $5,000—the amount you wish to pay for his services."

"Well—no, perhaps not, but then—"

"In other words, such a man is not in the market at the price you quote. Now, I have had a rather extensive experience as a clerk behind the counter in a retail store, but that experience would not be worth a great deal to me if I had not supplemented it with a thoro study of the basic principles of salesmanship and of training a retail sales force. Subsequently, I went on the road for a wholesale house and had an opportunity to observe closely the methods of a large number of retailers. As I was at the same time studying the principles of successful merchandising, I acquired the ability to recognize merchandising opportunities that frequently were not seen at all by the local merchant, and to "spot" the weak

points in his selling methods. I used this knowledge freely in the interest of my customers and indirectly for the benefit of my house.

"In the same way, I have made a study of accounting and finance, including credit management and collection practice. My latest studies have been along the line of advertising, as the result of which I have been able to write some effective newspaper copy, both for my house and for my customers. In addition, I have suggested other methods of publicity that have proved profitable in a number of instances.

"Now, while I don't know much about clothing, I do know how to get to the bottom of a subject quickly, and if you will simply turn me loose in your plant for a week or two, I warrant you I'll get the necessary information.

"One thing more. My own experience and my study of the experience of other business men, have given me a broad foundation of business knowledge. Upon this foundation I am now ready to rear my specialty. With your permission, I'll henceforth make your business my specialty. Don't you think I am just the man you want?"

The president smiled; but it was the kind of smile that told as plainly as words that the sale was made, that the young man had secured the position.

"You've made me believe," the president said, "that you are the man I want, and if I find your references to be all right, you may consider the matter closed. How soon will you be available?"

In business as in love, success depends upon ability to make the party of the second part see things as you see them. It is worth any one's time and effort to acquire that power.

The selling of one's services is a problem that at some time or other confronts every one. Such selling is not limited to occasions as the one just described; on the contrary, opportunities for selling our services will most frequently be found in connection with the work in which we are engaged. In business the big opportunities are oftentimes of a man's own making, and nine times out of ten it is necessary in order to grasp such opportunities to "sell" someone our fitness for certain work or our ideas for certain improvements. For this reason, even if for no other, everybody is interested—whether he realizes it or not—in an understanding of the principles governing salesmanship.

It need hardly be said that in every business success depends upon effective selling activities. It is true, of course, that the product must be right as to quality and price; it is also true that the business must be wisely financed, that accounts must be properly kept; yet after all, production is not good production unless the article produced can be sold. The most skilful financing cannot keep a business alive very long unless the article can be sold at a profit and in sufficient quantities.

It is hardly possible, therefore, to insist too strongly

upon a due recognition of the importance of the selling function in every department of business.

Following the Rules

After two chapters of an introductory nature—tho no less important on that account—the author in Chapters III to VI of our assignment discusses the selling process from the preliminaries of the interview until the sale is made. It will be found upon examination that the young man who so successfully "sold" himself to the clothing manufacturer followed closely, whether he knew it or not, the rules laid down in the current assignment. We have reason to believe that before calling on the clothing manufacturer, the applicant had taken pains to inform himself as to just what the head of the company had in mind. By making inquiries, he probably learned just what kind of man the president was, so that he might determine the best way to approach him. That salesman had a thoro knowledge, too, of his proposition—his business knowledge—and knew how it would apply to the need of the man whom he was going to see. He was prepared, in other words, to link up his proposition with the other man's needs.

He secured his prospect's attention by talking first of the latter's ideas and interests. He took the "you" attitude. He sustained that attention until it ripened into interest. With his question so framed as to call for an answer of agreement, he tested to learn whether he had really created desire, and when

he felt, as a result of these tests, that it was reasonable to presume that desire was created, he brought about the close of the transaction by coming to a definite agreement with his prospect. He really dominated and directed the interview at every point.

Such favorable results are not secured by means of a haphazard talk, but only by a carefully-laid plan of procedure—by a preconceived presentation of the proposition. And whether as salesmen we go out to sell material things, or as executives we seek to "sell" our ideas and plans to those who can assist us in carrying them out, we should do well in matters of any importance to plan our selling talks in the light of the principles laid down in the current reading assignment.

Helping Dreams Come True

A New York real estate salesmen who for years had been plodding along with only indifferent success discovered in the course of his work that a great many city people cherish a dream of having a house in the country, and that the only thing which prevents the realization of that dream is their lack of sufficient funds. This salesman reasoned that if he could obtain the names of city people who had means, or who, at least, enjoyed a comfortable income, he could probably stir up their latent desire for a country home. So he decided to make himself a specialist in suburban and country home property.

His first step was to obtain permission to place upon his list those suburban houses which he ob-

served were advertised for sale in the daily newspapers. He also found that people who owned attractive and desirable suburban houses were frequently willing to sell if they could get their price for the property.

The salesman determined to establish a standard and to build up, if he could, a reputation for absolute truthfulness, and for handling only desirable properties, so that eventually people would have absolute confidence in whatever he might offer for sale.

In the preparation of his campaign, he engaged an expert photographer to take pictures of the attractive-looking houses on his list. Frequently, several views were taken of one house, and in some cases the interiors also were photographed.

Methods that Brought Success

The salesman was now ready to select his prospects. Some of these he secured by advertising specific houses for sale in the real estate pages of metropolitan Sunday papers. But they were not numerous enough to keep him busy. He obtained from various sources the names of officers and department heads of big corporations. From lists of recent beneficiaries under probated wills he also secured the names of many apparently desirable prospects. These names he checked against the city directory. Those who already lived in suburban places were of course eliminated; those who lived in the city were his proper prospects.

To be sure, a great many of these prospects were eliminated after a single short interview. That was

to be expected. Others in the course of the interview would indicate just what type of home they had in mind. One had visions of a chicken farm; another wanted a house near the water; a third wanted a location where he wouldn't be dependent upon a train schedule, and so on. The salesman wisely selected his photographs according to the circumstances and inclinations of his prospect. If the prospect was the president of a corporation and a man of means, he was shown a beautiful country villa calling for a large investment. If a salaried man earning, say, $3,000 a year, he was approached with the picture of a house costing from $5,000 to $8,000, of which amount a large part could be "paid like rent."

It wasn't long before this man had hundreds of prospects, houses to suit the purse and desires of any one, and a reputation for quick sales and fair dealing. His business quickly grew to a point where it required increased facilities. A suite of city offices and a growing organization of salesmen are the present evidence of a selling policy that is based upon sound selling principles. His methods of organizing territory for an effective selling campaign and of picking prospects are discussed in Chapter IX of the present assignment. In the chapter on "Human Appeals That Sell," is found the basis of many of that man's selling ideas, and in the chapter on "Cooperation, Influence and Friendship," the value of cooperation and the methods of securing such cooperation are clearly set forth.

Tricks that Are Vain in Salesmanship

At times a salesman mistakenly substitutes cleverness for originality and a sound selling plan. At times, too, sales managers are guilty of devising methods for their men that not only are unethical, but in some cases actually dishonest.

Not long ago, the advertising manager of a corporation was informed by the telephone operator that a gentleman was outside who wished to present him with a book. The visitor upon being admitted approached the advertising manager, carrying in his hand a large and finely-bound volume.

"Presented to you with our compliments, sir," he announced. "My firm wishes to place a limited number of these in the hands of prominent men and has instructed me to call on you to present this with our compliments."

"Well, this is rather surprising," said the advertising man, "who is this generous donor?"

The young man mentioned the name of a certain publishing house, and went on to say that there was no charge whatever for the book. All that the recipient had to do was to subscribe for the magazine issued by the publishing house and pay his subscription in advance.

"We need a subscription so as to be able to guarantee to our advertisers a certain minimum circulation," the visitor concluded, "and we wish to give you this book absolutely free if you'll agree to subscribe for the magazine."

Such methods necessarily disgust an intelligent

business man. And in this case the effect of the salesman's talk was especially unfortunate, because the advertising manager had recently bought space in that publication. He was, accordingly, one of those advertisers to whom a certain quantity of circulation had to be guaranteed! It is reasonable to suppose that he quickly decided not to pay out good money for placing the company's advertisements before subscribers who had been obtained by such means.

> *Nowhere is honesty—straightforward, transparent honesty—more essential to permanent success than in the selling field.*

No work on salesmanship would be complete unless it contained a somewhat exhaustive discussion of the matter of closing the sale—the most difficult, as well as the most important part of personal salesmanship. When salesmen come together and discuss the big or difficult sales they have made, they frequently describe their methods of getting the signature "on the dotted line" as tho these methods were some species of hypnotism, or as tho the buyer had somehow been tricked into doing something that was against his own interests. As a rule, however, salesmen who talk in this manner do not really mean what they say, and would strongly resent any questioning of their honesty. As pointed out in the present assignment, closing practices, however clever or strong, rarely induce a person to do what he really

doesn't wish to do. They seldom persuade him to buy something that his own judgment tells him not to buy. The point is that a great many people, even when they are convinced that a certain line of action is right, will not act of their own volition. They must be helped to act. The principle underlying all methods of closing a sale is summed up in one statement: *Make* decisions—do not merely *expect* them.

Since indecision hampers a great many business transactions, every executive and every one who expects to assume executive responsibilities, will do well to study the technique of closing a sale, so that he may be able to make decisions for those whom he has convinced.

In the selling process, more men fail at the close than at any other stage. Why is this? Because many salesmen lack the courage to assume that the man to whom they have presented their proposition is going to buy; hence, they fail to drive in and make his decision for him. Instead, they sit back for an awkward moment, during which their prospect is permitted to come to a negative decision of "thinking it over."

"Thinking it over" is the bugbear of the salesman. True, some lines of business seem to consist principally of loose ends, where each man is under obligation to pass on the matter of decision to some one else. Nevertheless, it is the salesman's work to gather those loose ends and to bring things to a head.

"Successful salesmanship is largely a matter of

constant endeavor to improve oneself," says Chapter VIII. If so, the formula is a guide not only to successful selling, but to successful living, hence, every reader of the MODERN BUSINESS Course, whether or not he is engaged in the work of selling, should read carefully the essential qualifications of a salesman, as laid down in that chapter.

Matters that Count

The last two chapters in the present assignment are especially important, in that they deal with those many little things that really are not little, since they exert a great influence upon the salesman's efficiency and upon the success of his work in the field. In Chapter IX the author discusses, among other things, the proper use of the salesman's time, the planning of his day's work and of tomorrow's work. These are matters which the capable salesman never ignores. In fact, many salesmen attribute their success to the scrupulous care with which they attend to such matters. Whatever will enable the salesman to interview the largest number of prospective purchasers in a day or week, will, by the simple law of averages, increase sales correspondingly. Even tho he possess only ordinary selling ability, the salesman may, by paying due attention to these things, achieve greater net results than one who, with greater native ability, combines a disregard of the subjects discussed in this chapter.

The last chapter in the assignment bears the title, "Cooperation, Influence and Friendship," a title suffi-

ciently suggestive to insure a careful reading of the chapter. Here is discussed not only the value of cooperation obtained from the home office and from customers, but also the manner in which such cooperation is best obtained. Some salesmen have the ability to make a personal friend of every customer, and to enlist his cooperation in finding other customers. This ability can be cultivated and is probably second to none in its bearing upon the salesman's success.

Said one specialty salesman whose ability in this direction is responsible for a very successful sales career:

"I have two hundred people working for me every day in my territory. All I do is to go around and gather in the fruits of their work."

He referred to satisfied customers whose friendship he had obtained by his geniality and courtesy. Needless to say, he saw to it that their interest in him and in his work did not go without due expression of gratitude and appreciation from him.

The reading of the current assignment will correct many wrong views of salesmanship, such, for example, as that it consists chiefly of a bold front and a glib tongue. It will also make clear to the thoughtful reader that many who do not think of themselves as having any selling ability, may possess every requisite for successful salesmanship. Lastly, it will indicate, in unmistakable terms, how ability to sell may be cultivated, even where little actual fitness for such work is apparent.

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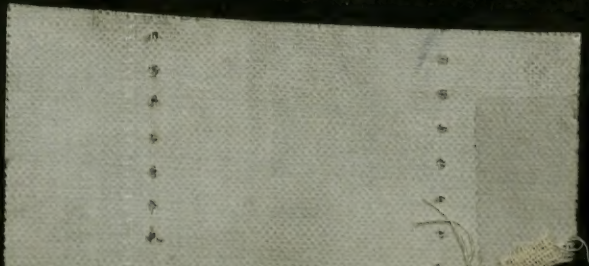

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